

**THE PUNJAB NEWS IN THE AKHBAR-I-DARBAR-I-MUALLA**  
**[PRESERVED IN THE JAIPUR ARCHIVES]**

[By Sardar Ganda Singh, M. A.]

Jaipur State may, perhaps, be said to be one of the richest States, if not the richest, in northern India in its collection of contemporary News-letters of the Mughal days. The old and new capitals of the State have enjoyed comparative peace during the last three centuries, with the result that the State archives and officials records remained intact to a great extent. What has been lost, or has not been preserved, is due to causes not unusual in our country—the absence of record-mindedness and of properly organised record offices.

I had come to know of the existence of a valuable collection of *Akhbarat* at Jaipur from Sir Jadunath Sarkar, who had suggested to me to examine them for first-hand contemporary information regarding the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Delhi in 1675. Guru Har Krishan, the eighth Sikh Guru, had, under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb, been received and looked after by Mirza Raja Jai Singh in Delhi, and Guru Tegh Bahadur had accompanied **Jaiharaj Baharn Singh to Assam. I had, therefore, expected to find some** authentic records about them in the State archives. Through the courtesy of Sardar Bahadur Sir Teja Singh, then Chief Engineer in Jaipur, and Mr. Tirnani, the Superintendent of the Department, I was able to examine **the Mughal News-letters, properly called the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* in** September and December, 1944, and January, 1946. From what I was then able to explore, I can say that next only, perhaps, to the Maratha collections of News-letters, the Old Historical Records in the Diwan-i-Hazoor of Jaipur are a mine of rich historical information regarding the reigns of Emperors Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah and Farrukh Siyar. I was told that a large number of records were still lying in some of the old chambers. I hope they have since been rescued from the ravages of white ants.

As I was interested mostly in the Punjab news with particular reference to the Sikhs, I devoted my attention to the selection and copying of these alone. And, I am glad to say that my labour was amply rewarded. I was able to collect news covering 222 foolscap pages, beginning with the 9th year of Aurangzeb's reign to the 7th of Farrukh Siyar's. The *Akhbarat* of Emperor Aurangzeb are not continuous and complete. There are big gaps both in months and years. I am, however, inclined to believe that some of these gaps will be filled up when all available papers have been rescued and brought to the Record Office for preservation. In the *Akhbars* of Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah and Farrukh Siyar, there are much smaller gaps, in some cases only of days.

The Mughal Emperors had an elaborate system for the collection of news from all over the country through a network of official News-writers, called the *akhbar-nawis*, *wakil-nawis*, *wapai-niao*, etc., who sent through *harkarans*, or couriers, their *parcha* or *fard-i-akhbar* (news-sheet) to their chief at the capital or in the Imperial Camp. The latter, who was a trusted official of the State, submitted these *Akhbars*, in a consolidated form, to the Emperor. The *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, thus, were not exclusively the news of the Imperial court, as the title would suggest, but were generally summaries of the news submitted to the Emperor, with a brief record of His Majesty's reactions and orders thereon. These, in turn, were transmitted to various *subahs* and states by their respective news-writers, or sometimes a central agency, to keep their masters or subscribers in touch with what was going

on at the Imperial Court and in different parts of the country. In the same way was the Jaipur collection of the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* made.

The Punjab news in the above Akhbars throw a flood of new light on the history of the province, especially during the reigns of Emperors Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah and Farrukh Siyar, with which they mostly deal. And, when read along with the diary-like, but more detailed, contemporary account of **Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, who was an eye-witness of many art event recorded by him in the *Taakirat-us-Salatin-i-Chughata*, they should be of immense value in the re-interpretation and reconstruction of history.**

**The Akhbars of Aurangzeb's reign deal mostly with administrative matters.** Excepting that of the Sikhs, there was then no religious or political movement in the Punjab to be mentioned in the News-letters. And, of the Sikhs there is no mention in them. This is, however, compensated by the abundance of news regarding Banda Singh, popularly called Banda, during the reign of Aurangzeb's three successors.

**It is not possible to give here a detailed survey of the Akhbars. I will, therefore, continue myself only to a few of them which are of great historical importance in moulding our views about men and events of those days.**

#### AJIT SINGH, NOT THE SON OF GURU GOBIND SINGH.

There are a number of entries in the Akhbars about Ajit Singh who is mentioned therein as "the son of Guru Gobind Singh". Orders were issued by Emperor Bahadur Shah on the 26th of Sha'ban, of the 2nd year of his reign, October 30, 1708 A.D., to grant to him *khil'at-umatami* or a robe\* of mourning, after the death of the Guru. On the 13th of Sha'ban in the 4th regnal year (September 26, 1710), when the Emperor was moving against Banda Singh. Ajit Singh was brought to the royal presence by Raja Chatrasal Bundela and was detained in the Gamp in his custody. He was, later on, on the 17th Ziqada (December 27)' ordered to be handed over to *Kar-Talab Khan*, and sometime later to Sarbrah Khan. On the 1st day of Bahadur Shah's 6th regnal year (1st of Zil-hijja, 1123 al-Hijri, December 30, 1711 A.D.), he presented a *nazar* of nine *ashrafis* to His Majesty, and the latter was pleased to grant to him the village of Chak Guru, the present c'ty of Amritsar.

This Ajit Singh was not the son of Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru's eldest son Ajit Singh had been killed in the battle of Chamkaur in December, 1704. Ajit Singh of the *AkKfiaT-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* was a goldsmith's son, brought up by Mata Sundri, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh, and was so named by her in memory of her son, the real Ajit Singh. But the adopted Ajit Singh was too ambitious a young man to have much regard for the sentiments and wishes of the Mata, or for the relics of the Guru, and had to be disclaimed and disinherited by her. He met an ignominious death by being dragged behind an elephant during the reign of Muhammad Shah in 1134 al-Hijri, 1722 A.D., for a false allegation of abetment of the murder of a Muslim mendicant.

#### BANDA SINGH WAS NOT A SIKH GURU.

It will be interesting to know that Banda Singh has been referred to and mentioned in the *Akhbars* as *Guru*, *Gobind*, *Guru Gobind* and *Guru Gobind Singh*, and\* strange as it may appear, the mistake has persisted throughout the period of his political activity for six years, beginning with the 4th year of Bahadur Shah's reign, when he first appeared in the Imperial News, to the 5th of Farrukh Siyar's, when he finally disappeared from the stage after his execution in Delhi on the 29th Jamadi-us-Sani, 1128 al-Hijri, June 9, 1710 A.D. As every one knows, Banda Singh was not a Guru of the Sikhs.

The Guruship had ended with the tenth and the last Guru Gobind Singh. Banda Singh was only a political leader of the Sikhs, having been nominated by the last Guru as Commander of the forces of the Khalsa.

#### HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE MUSLIMS.

Banda Singh, a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh, was the first after the Guru himself, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, to oppose the mighty Mughal Empire and to carve out a Sikh principality in the Punjab and to pave the way for the conquest of the province, half a century later by the Sikh Missaldars. The Jaipur news-writer at the Imperial capital tells us in his report, written some time before the battle of Sirhind (fought on 13 May, 1710), that the Sikhs, then under the leadership of Banda Singh, had a deep-rooted hatred for Wazir Khan, the *faujdar* of Sirhind, "for the murder of the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh" Otherwise, Banda Singh had no hatred for the Muslims as such. Except those killed in the battle of Sirhind, including the\* *faujdar* himself, or some of the associates of Wazir Khan, no one else was touched. In fact, after the occupation of Sirhind (on the 26th of Rabi-ul-awwal, 1122 A.H., 14 May, 1710), the Sikhs, according to the same reporter, issued such strict orders as not to permit even the killing of a single animal.

On the 7th of Jamadi-ul-awwal, June 23, five weeks after the victory and occupation of Sirhind, Banda Singh told Jan Muhammad, the Zamindar of Gulab Nagar (the new Sikh name given to the town of Buriya):—

تو از میدان کل پرگنه نبوده ایم و تقصیری که کرده بودی معاف نمودیم باید که با جمعیت  
خدا رفته سردار خان زمیندار چون تبه بیادر - باز برای تبه جلال خان همراه خواهی شد

"I have forgiven your crime and made you the *Zamindar* of the whole\* *paragannah*. You should proceed with your men and bring in Sardar Khan of Chundla. Then you will accompany me for the chastisement of Jala! Khan Afghan."

#### AN EDICT OF BAHADUR SHAH.

On the 29th of Shawwal, 4th regnal year (1122 al-Hijri, 10 December, 1710 A.D.), Emperor Bahadur Shah, from his Camp in the neighbourhood of Loh-garh near Sadhaura, directed *Bakhshi-ul-Mumalik* Mahabat Khan to issue edicts to the *faujdar*s in the neighbourhood of Shahjanabad "to kill the worshippers of Nanak (the Sikhs) wherever they were found". The original entry reads as follows:—

۲۹ شوال سنه ۴ - به بعضی املاک مهابت خان بهادر فرمودند که حسب الحکم والا  
بغلام فوجداران نواح جهان آباد بفرستد که نانک پرستان را هرجا که بیابند بقتل رسانند

#### MUSLIMS IN BANDA SINGH'S ARMY.

The above edict for an indiscriminate massacre of the Sikhs seems to have brought no change in Banda Singh's policy. Although himself pursued from place to place, he did not, evidently, wish to reduce his struggle to the level of a communal strife. His was a political struggle. He would not, therefore, impose any religious restrictions upon the Muslims. And they flocked to him in large numbers. The following news is self-explanatory:—

۲۱ ربیع الاول سنه ۵ بهکوتی داس هرگاه فرود به مشورت هدایت الهی جان به نظر انور  
گذراند نانک پرست متهور لغایت ۱۹ شهبخال در قصبه که نور مقام دارد - دیوی ولا  
توبه داده و هدیه نبوده که مردم مسلمین را آزار ندهم - چنانچه هرکس مسلمین رجوع می  
شوند - بوسیله و مراجع مترو نبوده نکاه می شود و انجارت داده که خطبه و نماز می  
خوانده باشند چنانچه پنج هزار کس مسلمین جمع شده وفات متهور اختیار نبوده  
از نانک و نماز در هیچ متهوران آوام یافت

"21st Babi-ul-awwal, 5th regnal year (14 April, 1711).

Bhagwati Das *harkarah*, through Hidaytuliah Khan, presented to His Majesty a news-sheet reporting that—

(1) the wretched Nanak-worshipper has his camp in the town of Kalanaur upto the 19th instant. During this period he has promised and proclaimed. 'I do not oppress the Muslims'. Accordingly for any Muslim who approaches him, he fixes a daily allowance and wages, and looks after him. He has permittel them to read *khutba* and *namaz*. As such, five thousand Muslims have gathered round him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call and say their prayers in the army of the wretched (Sikhs)." This is also mentioned in another news saving:—

گورو مقهور درقصه کلانور آمده پایتیه ادبار قائم نموده راز هلود و مسلمین هر که می رود نوکر می کند - قریب پنج هزار سوار مسلمین جمع شدند و هر روز افزون می شوند - باید دید که خواستنه کردگار چیست -

"The wretched Guru, having established himself in the town of Kalanaur, is taking into his service any Hindu or Muslim who goes to him. Five thousand Muslim horsemen have gathered and are daily increasing. Let us see what God wishes"

۱۳ ربیع الثانی سنه ۵ - بهکوتی داس هرکاره فردے عرضی به معرفت هدایت الهی خان به نظر انور گزرايد که گورو مقهور لغایت نهم ربیع الثانی سنه ۵ دو گروه قصه بقاله اولرگی دارد و رام چند نامی سکهاں وغیره بمعنه هفت هزار سوار و پیاده از طرف کوهستان. جسوں آمده رفیق مقهور گردیده و هر که هلود و مسلمین برلی نوکری می آید نگاه داشته خوراک می دهد و میگوید که لوٹ معاف است - مقهور نموده که اگر افواج بهاید مقابله بکند و اگر رایات عالمتاب نرسد برآه لکھی چنگل بطرف اجمیر شده به شاهجهان آباد بروند.

"13th Babi-us-Sani, 5th regnal year (20 May, 1711).

Bhagwati Das *harkarah*, through Hidayatullah Khan, presented to His Majesty a news-sheet saving that the wretched (5urn is encamped (loitering about) at two *kos* from the town of Batala upto the 9th Babi-us-Sani, 5th regnal year. Bain Chand and other Sikhs with seven thousand horses and foot have come from the direction of Jamrnn Hills and have joined him. Who-soever from amongst the Hindus and Muslims comes to him for service is looked after and fed. He has granted the right of booty to them. It is decided that if the (Imperial) forces come, he will oppose them; if not, they (the Sikhs) will move towards Ajmer. *via* Lakhi Jangal and go to -Shahjahan—abad."

#### BANDA SINGH'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH RAJPUT RAJAS.

Ou the 10th of Babi-us-Sani (4th Bahadurshahi regnal year) 1122 al-Hijr, 28 May, 1710 A.D., it was reported to Fmperor Bahadur Shah that Banda Singh had .written-letters to Baja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Baja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur, and that they\* had replied back to him. Evidently the reply was in the negative. For some time they waited for orders from the Imperial Headquarters to march against the Sikh leader. On the 19th of Sha'bau of the 5th Bahadurshahi regnal year (21 September, 1711 A.D.), it was reported that both these rajas were encamped as the village of Loni in the neighbourhood of the Capital and that they had moved 3 *kos* in the direction of Dabar for the chastisement of Banda Singh.

Banda Singh had by now come out of his mountain recesses and regained much of his lost position and prestige. According to Askar Bao *harkarah's* report of the 1st of Zi'aada of the 5th year. 30 November, 1711, the Sikh chief had written to Raja Ajit Singh and Raja Sawai Jai Singh. "Now that :you have entered into our country, know ye that ye shall soon find me getting

into your country". But the Rajput rams were steadfast in their proverbial loyalty to the Mughal Empire. They killed the Sikh spies (messengers), says the report, and said: "We are *khana-zad* (slaves) of the Empire. The wretched (Sikh leader) shall soon be killed or captured". And they announced it by the beat of drum in their camp that if any of the mediators or emissaries of the Sikhs was found there, he should be put to death.

#### THE SEALS AND COIN OF BANDA SINGH.

Unlike other adventurers and founders of kingdoms, the S'kh leader, Banda Singh, stands unique in his unpretentious and selfless service to his people. His noble example was followed by the later Sikh Misaldar conquerers. The *tughra*, or the royal titles on the official farmans, and the inscriptions on official seals and coins are emblems of legal authority. But Banda Singh was not actuated by any motives of self-glory or self-aggrandisement. He would not permit his name to be mentioned in any document, monogram or inscription. His official seal bore the following inscription, as reported to Emperor Bahadur Shah on the 20th of Jamadi-ul-Awwal of the 4th year, 6-July, 1710: —

عظمت نانک گورو هم ظاهر و هم باطن است  
پادشاه دین و دنیا آپ سچا صاحب است

"The greatness, of Guru Nanak is visible as well as invisible;

The king of the spiritual as well as temporal world is the True Lord himself."

This was later on replaced by the following:—

دیگ و تیغ و فتح و نصرت بیدنگ  
یافت از نانک گورو گوہند سنگھ

"Kettle (the symbol of means to feed the poor),

Sword (the symbol of power to protect the weak and helpless), Victory and unhesitating Patronage, have been obtained from Nanak Guru Gobind Singh."

And the coin of Banda Singh had the following couplet as its inscription :—

سکہ زد بر هر دو عالم تیغ نانک و اہب است  
فتح گوہند سنگھ شاہ شاہان فضل سچا صاحب است

"Struck com in the two worlds: the sword of Nanak is the granter of desires;

Victory to Gobind Singh, the king of kings; All grace belongs to the True Lord Himself."

#### THE DEATH CONTROVERSY SETTLED.

The *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* have set at rest, for all time to come, the controversy about the death of Banda Singh. Some of the Sikh writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have allowed a good deal of fiction to be interwoven into his life. According to them, he was dragged behind a horse or an elephant and was thrown away in an unconscious state, from which he recovered and later on reappeared in the Jaramu Hills. There he is said to have lived for twenty-five years more, dying a natural death in 1741 A.D.

The contemporary accounts in Muhammad Harisi's *Ibrat Namah*, Muhammad Habi Kamwar Khan's *Tazkirat-us-Salatin-u-Chughata*, Khafi Khan's? *Mmtakhab-ul-Lubab*, and the *Farruh Siyar Namah* by an anonymous author are all unanimous in saying that Banda Singh was executed in Delhi. But

if there was any possibility of a doubt at ail, that too Has been removed by the *Akhbaw-Darbar-i-Mualla* of the 1st of Rajjab of the 6th year of Farrukh Siyar's reign, giving the news of the previous day, 29th Jamadi-us-Sami, 1128 al-Hijri, 9 June, 1716. The news runs as follows:—

• فرورجب سه - بعرض رسيد كه ابراهيم خان مير آتشي و سر بردا خان کوتوال گرو  
مقهور و امعه ينسرو هژده نادر همرا هياتش را بموجب حكم والا به سمت درگاه  
حضرت خواجه قطب متصل آب سبيل خواجه فتو برده اول پسرش را بقتل  
رساينده پيش مقهور داده - بعد آن مقهور را با مذاب هائى بسنيار بقتل رساينده  
بلد از بنده جدا کرده - همراهيانش را نيز بقتل رسايندند -

"1st Rajjab, 5th regnal year (10 June, 1716).

Reported that Ibrahim Khan, *MiM-Atish*, and Sarbrah Khan, *Kotwal*, having taken the wretched Guru, his son and Irs eighteen companions, towards the mausoleum of Khwaja Qutb near Khwaja Fattoo's *ab-i-sabeel* (free drinking-water place), according to His Majesty's orders, at first killed his son and gave him to the wretched fellow, and then put him to death with many tortures, hacking him to pieces, limb by limb, They killed his companions also."

A person hacked to pieces, limb by limb, could not have come to life again *mi* lived for twenty-five years.

In the end it may be mentioned that an effort is being made to print the *Akhhar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* (Punjab News) in a series of volumes, beginning with the above as the first volume, followed by others containing the later *Akhbars*.